Nominee: FalconStor

Nomination title: FalconStor FreeStor Software-Defined Platform

FreeStor is a software-defined storage architecture solution that simplifies the intelligent delivery of data services across virtual, cloud, hybrid, SDS and flash storage environments. It allows IT managers to maximise storage utilisation and reduce costs while providing intelligent insight into operational efficiencies, without investing in all new technology or being forced to replace older technology. FreeStor uses ground-breaking Intelligent Abstraction® technology that works across any and all storage infrastructures - regardless of platform, type, or vendor – in a single view and at a single price. It allows IT teams to gain ultra-control of their storage heterogeneously across legacy, modern and virtual environments. FreeStor is built on five key pillars which provide an organisation's network with:

-       Business continuity –This ensures that files, applications, systems and even entire sites are always available. FreeStor eliminates vendor lock-in while virtualising the entire storage infrastructure.

-       Optimisation – FreeStor's optimisation with inline deduplication means lower storage costs and increased backup efficiencies.

-       Migration and protection – A unified platform for legacy and virtual storage resources to migrate seamlessly between tiers and disparate systems.

-       Disaster Recovery (DR) – FreeStor automates complex recovery processes, ensuring everything can be recovered via the mobile or tablet interface, wherever you travel, before business operations are affected.

-       Intelligent Predictive Analytics: Only FreeStor offers analytics and insight across heterogeneous storage environments, allowing users to take action, both proactively and reactively, as needed. This approach allows you to better manage capacity, performance and availability.

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The key to FreeStor is its intelligent abstraction layer, a patented approach which allows data to migrate to, from and across any platform, physical or virtual. Front-end applications and servers link to back-end storage venues to allow optimised data storage, manipulation and protection without concern for protocols. It allows storage administrators to use the FreeStor GUI from any browser, smartphone or tablet. The high-availability platform includes Active-Active I/O and REST APIs to enable managed service providers (MSPs) and cloud providers to integrate FreeStor in their management consoles.

In addition, FreeStor provides intelligent predictive analytics that uniquely offer insight across heterogeneous storage environments. The analytics empower users with the ability to take action, both proactively and reactively, as needed to better manage and monitor business-critical data

end-to-end. Unlike siloed array-based analytics, FreeStor's intelligent predictive analytics provides real-time and historical analytics across heterogeneous storage systems to better manage capacity, performance and availability. By combining intelligent abstraction with predictive analytics, users are able to take intelligent action based on real-time information to optimise and maintain their storage environment from a single pane of glass, regardless of storage vendor or location.

FreeStor combines a cutting-edge horizontal platform architecture with the ability to leverage new storage options, resulting in greater efficiencies, reduced downtime, lower costs and improved simplicity. This FreeStor layer makes it very efficient and easier to manage all storage arrays in the infrastructure, no matter what type of media or which vendor they are from. It gives users additional features that other vendors can't provide such as snapshot and DR across platforms and arrays. It has a centralised management system to enhance the simplicity of managing storage infrastructure and utilisation capabilities. This provides a huge cost saving and optimises performance without the need to buy expensive new or modern storage arrays.

Although FreeStor doesn't directly manage the different storage arrays, it uses the hardware vendor's interface to manage the LUNs. FreeStor analyses these LUNs to keep latency and overheads to a minimum, thus allowing the user to benefit from the other data services in the FreeStor platform. In addition, FreeStor is sold using a subscription OpEx model, meaning customers have the ability to predict foreseeable storage costs, as everything is already included for one per TB price.

More than 3,000 organisations worldwide, including 115 of the Fortune 500 (23%), have turned to FreeStor technology to address their data management solutions needs. By creating a virtualised software-defined layer that sits on top of disparate storage arrays, FreeStor has allowed customers to avoid vendor lock-in. FalconStor has achieved this by eliminating the downside of outdated licensing models and shifting to a transparent consumption-based subscription-pricing model.

Sunrise Communications AG in Switzerland is a typical FreeStor customer. The telecommunications provider implemented the FreeStor solution to reduce software costs and remove vendor lock-in issues.

"Once we implemented FreeStor, we went to a new model where we pay for what we actually use. This pricing model allows us to be more flexible. That's pretty much the key thing – optimising at the software level with FreeStor has actually saved us a lot of money and will continue to save us a lot of money into the future," says Sandor Orban, Technical Lead Infrastructure Services at Sunrise.

The main differentiator between FreeStor and storage solutions from other vendors is that it enables the management of data heterogeneously from one GUI, regardless of vendor or type, in the cloud or virtual, eliminating the complexity and cost of unmanageable silos and data growth. FreeStor's intelligent abstraction layer sits on top of multiple storage platforms, meaning there is a common way of managing different storage arrays. Other vendors require a different GUI and set of tools to manage each array as they all have different interfaces. Being heterogeneous allows FreeStor to provide the ultimate cost saving solution, where other vendors can only see into their

array. This cross environment capability greatly reduces the amount of time the staff needs to manage the storage infrastructure and they can now allocate their time to revenue generating projects.

In comparison with other software-defined storage platform vendors, FreeStor offers:

• Scalability - FreeStor is vastly superior to its competitors when it comes to scalability and can manage up to 128 storage servers in two-node or four-node high-availability configurations. Competitors like Nexenta, DataCore and Maxta are only able to manage around a fifth of this figure.

• Replication – With FreeStor's snapshot technology, customers benefit from continuous data protection. This is not the case with all SDS providers and DataCore's product does not allow for this.

• Deduplication – Unlike other SDS platforms, FreeStor deduplicates data, allowing for huge cost savings on storage. This benefits users by improving storage utilisation, reducing storage footprint, providing WAN optimised replication and data movement. Costs can be reduced by as much as 95 percent.

Why nominee should win

• FalconStor's FreeStor reduces costs for customers as it gives them the freedom from storage hardware vendor lock-in

• FreeStor's ground-breaking Intelligent Abstraction® approach works on a virtualised storage pool abstracted from the underlying physical storage

• FreeStor increases productivity through a single-pane-of-glass to provision, orchestrate and manage capacity and data services

• FreeStor improves efficiency through its virtualised storage pool, global deduplication, and WAN optimised replication that reduces operational and infrastructure costs

• FalconStor also increases agility through common data services being offered across storage infrastructures, regardless of platform, type, or vendor